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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
RALEIGH 27611

JAMES B. HUNT, JR.
GOVERNOR

January 25, 1978

Dear Professor Lederberg:

I want to thank you for your much appreciated letter in response to my inquiry concerning a state-sponsored residential high school concentrating in science and mathematics.

Thoughtful responses from 139 distinguished scientists, science-education administrators and prominent individuals concerned with science, representing a variety of disciplines and regions have been received and carefully studied. Sixty-six percent must be classified as highly favorable to ecstatic. Eighteen percent were favorable but stated reservations or caveats of one type or another. Six percent were non-committal even if intrigued with the idea. Only nine percent may be said to be unfavorable, usually because of fears that the broad objectives of general education will not be achieved if too much emphasis is given to science and mathematics.

Dr. Ronald Breslow, Mitchill Professor of Chemistry, Columbia University, says that it is "one of the most exciting and innovative proposals I have seen for a long time." Dr. Frank Press, President Carter's Science Advisor and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, suggests that "...such a school can serve as a model for curriculum innovation in other high schools." Several direct attention to the need for special education for special scientific talents for the national good at a time when the need is high but standards low. Dr. K. O. Emery of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute bluntly states that "your proposal is one of elitist education, and that is just what is needed; far more funds have been devoted to the sub-normal students than to the exceptionally able ones." W. O. Baker, President of Bell Laboratories, writes that "...your concept of a residential high school of science and mathematics seems altogether timely. ...the present standards of education in secondary, as well as primary, schools have declined so seriously in recent years that there is a strong move to reemphasize the basic skills in a way which will surely be boring and wasteful for the time of really talented students. Accordingly, as is inherent in you ideas, the need for opportunities for excellence in study and teaching becomes even more compelling than ever."

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Buckminster Fuller thinks we "are intuitively inspired in a very important direction." Margaret Mead advises caution but states "I believe there is a need for higher level secondary schools, especially for rural and disadvantaged young people with high aptitudes but poor preparation." Kingsley Davis, Ford Professor of Sociology and Comparative Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (now at Southern California) possibly spoke for a majority: "I can hardly emphasize too strongly my warm and enthusiastic endorsement of your idea of founding a state-supported high school devoted to scholastic excellence. At a time when our high schools are performing very poorly (often less through their own fault than through the fault of other agencies), such a move could have a galvanizing effect that might lead to a renaissance of high school learning in this nation. . . .Also, you will find, I think, many excellent people who would feel, as I do, the appeal of the idea and hence a willingness to dedicate themselves to helping the effort. Finally, as you know, there are many excellent young people now finishing their training who will not be able to find jobs in universities and colleges. So I believe the attitude of those who plan the high school should be that they will be able to obtain some of the best teachers in the nation."

Before presenting proposals in May 1978 to the General Assembly of North Carolina and to federal and private sources for establishing and funding a residential high school, we have commenced further investigation of the concept behind the basic proposal. We are also further examining the experiences of such urban day schools as the Bronx High School of Science in New York City and others in America and abroad that have successfully set high standards of achievement. The form and organization of the school, the design of the curriculum, the procedures by which students are selected, the choice of faculty, the location of the school and its relationship to other institutions, organizations and communities concerned with science are only some of the more obvious details to be explored in depth.

With financial assistance from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation of Winston-Salem, I have created a small planning committee which is charged with preparing proposals in sufficient detail in order that you and I, the North Carolina General Assembly and others can understand fully how the school may be organized, how it is to function and its projected costs. Clear and informed decisions can then be made with respect to its establishment.

It is my hope that, to supplement the work of the Planning Committee, you will consent to be a member of an informal advisory group to guide us in this endeavor. I promise not to be demanding of your time, but will make brief reports to you

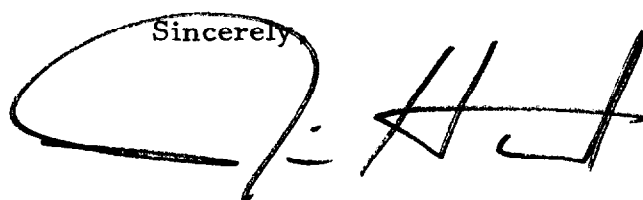
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occasionally as progress is made or as needs or questions arise. I request that you continue to help us set the direction for what may become the first residential high school for science and mathematics in America. The thoughtful and considered replies to my earlier letter have convinced me such an advisory group is desirable and probably necessary.

My warmest personal regards.

Sincerely


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